

Questions and Answers About Mexican Hass Avocados

Q: What are Mexican Hass avocados?

A: Hass is a variety of avocado. Mexican Hass avocados are only imported from the Mexican State of Michoacan. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently allows their importation into 19 north-eastern States, during the colder winter months of November through February.

Q: Into which States can Mexican Hass avocados currently be imported?

A: Mexican Hass avocados are currently being imported during the months of November through February into Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia.

Q: Into which new States is USDA proposing that Mexican Hass avocados be allowed distribution?

A: USDA published a proposed rule to expand the list of States into which avocados could be distributed for an extended period of time, including Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

Q: What is the new time period during which USDA is proposing that Mexican Hass avocados could be imported into the United States?

A: The new shipping period would be from November through April.

Q: What are the pests risks associated with avocados?

A: Pests associated with the importation of Mexican Hass avocados identified as a potential risk include three fruit flies, three seed weevils, a stem weevil, and a seed moth.

Q: How many Mexican Hass avocados are currently being imported into the United States?

A: The 2000-2001 shipping season was the fourth year the United States received avocado imports

from the approved orchards in the Mexican State of Michoacan. A total of 576 avocado shipments weighing 10,221,114 kilograms were imported. This is a 14% decrease over the 1999-2000 season when 669 shipments had been imported weighing 11,729,371 kilograms.

Q: Is there a new transit corridor being proposed for the avocado shipments to additional States?

A: APHIS is proposing that a new transit corridor be instated to allow imported Hass avocados to transit additional States. Currently the regulations do not allow Hass avocados to be moved west of an imaginary line extending from El Paso, TX, to Denver, CO, and due north from Denver. Under the proposal, Hass avocados would be eligible for importation into several States west of the imaginary line, by truck or car. Under this proposal, avocados would not be allowed to transit the area west of the following line: Following Interstate 10 north from El Paso, TX, to Las Cruces, NM, and then north following Interstate 25 to the Colorado border. Once in Colorado, trucks and rail cars carrying avocados would be free to move to any State located within the approved proposed distribution area. The current eastern shipping boundary would not change.

Q: Would I need an import permit to import avocados into the new States?

A: Yes. Anyone interested in importing Mexican Hass avocados must first apply for an import permit issued by APHIS.

Q: Would I need a compliance agreement to sell the avocados in the new States?

A: Yes. Wholesale distributors of Mexican Hass avocados would not be permitted to distribute them outside of the proposed approved States listed above. Therefore, any person other than the permittee (i.e., a second-party or subsequent handler) who moves or distributes the avocados following their importation into the United States must enter into a compliance agreement with APHIS. In the compliance agreement, the person must acknowledge and agree to observe all regulatory requirements for Mexican avocados including those for distributing and repackaging.

Q: How soon will this new rule be effective?

A: This proposed rule would not take effect until a final rule is published.

Q: How do I comment on the proposed rule?

A: Consideration will be given to comments received on or before September 11, 2001. To comment, please send an original and three copies to Docket No. 00-003-2, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Suite 3C03, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238.

Comments may be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing to review comments are requested to call ahead on (202) 690-2817 to facilitate entry into the comment reading room.

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